

## **Planning Today Equals A Brighter Tomorrow Rocklin's Strategic Approach to Growth**

By

Terry A. Richardson  
Community Development Director

In the 1980s, Rocklin was home to less than 7,400 people, yet community leaders knew that growth was inevitable. Visionary planning decisions made 20 years ago have defined Rocklin today, transforming the City into one of the region's most desirable communities.

Rocklin leaders ensure growth is "balanced," which means a healthy mix of housing, schools, parks, open space preservation, commercial and industrial development. Rocklin is a family community, where people live, work, shop, enjoy recreational opportunities and raise children. City officials anticipated that growth and acted aggressively to manage development instead of being managed by development.

The blueprint for planning decisions is Rocklin's General Plan. Constructed by City officials, community leaders and residents during the early 1980s - and updated in 1991 - the Plan prescribes where growth will occur and where it will not for every square foot of the City. People are encouraged to review the General Plan to see what uses are planned in their neighborhood and throughout Rocklin.

Residents should also be aware that Rocklin's General Plan is currently under review - people are encouraged to provide input. The review is managed by the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), which includes City officials, community leaders and public representatives. The Plan is being scrutinized and modified to ensure that planning decisions are consistent with the public vision for Rocklin's future to the year 2025. The GPAC will complete its review by May 2003 and forward their recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council.

While the General Plan provides a broad outline, Rocklin's City Council has created a process to ensure development proposals are consistent with the City's high standards. Although

an area may be zoned for residential development, this does not mean any residential design is acceptable.

In most cities, development proposals are reviewed by the Planning Commission and presented to the City Council. To protect residents, Rocklin added another step to its planning process. City officials have a pre-application process where developers meet with staff to conduct a comprehensive review of the proposed development. Important issues are addressed including consistency with the General Plan, environmental concerns, aesthetics of the project, impact of development on neighboring areas and issues relating to fire protection, engineering, building and other services.

The pre-application process is exhaustive and ensures that any project before the Planning Commission or City Council has undergone substantial review. As such, it is not unusual for City staff to conduct multiple pre-application meetings for a single parcel before forwarding a development to the Planning Commission. Additionally, prior to a public hearing, developers are encouraged to contact adjoining neighbors.

The benefits of this approach are significant. For example, the Sunset Ranchos project is the result of years of work by City officials. Instead of a patchwork quilt of individual developments, the City Council insisted that the entire 1,800-acre area be planned in a comprehensive manner. The result is a cohesive master planned community that integrates housing with community and neighborhood parks, three elementary schools, a high school, shopping centers and an employment center.

The heart of Rocklin's strategy is its overall land-use philosophy. The City would rather control its own destiny than cede control to outside jurisdictions that may not share Rocklin's high standards. It should be noted that Rocklin's projected growth remains within City boundaries envisioned by planners decades ago. While some Cities are growing beyond their limits, Rocklin is carefully growing into its projected overall size.

That is why Rocklin acted prudently to pursue annexation of the Sunset Ranchos, and that is why the City has undertaken a careful planning process for Clover Valley Lakes. Rocklin officials appreciate the significance of Clover Valley. It is part of the City's rich heritage; its

open space and pristine Oak trees represent the essence of Rocklin's standard of living. Instead of a region where access is restricted (as it currently is) or one where development runs roughshod over the environment, Rocklin is acting sensibly to provide public access to Clover Valley Lakes including safe accessible trails and open space amenities. The region's historical character is carefully balanced with residential land use designations previously approved for the area.

Growth is a challenge facing communities throughout California; local government decisions make the difference between prosperity and sprawl. For decades, Rocklin has followed the path of prudence, pragmatism and carefully planned growth within its designated planning area. This is why Rocklin is such a wonderful place to live, and why it is poised to remain that way for decades.

*Additional information regarding the City of Rocklin can be accessed over the Internet at [www.rocklin.ca.us](http://www.rocklin.ca.us)*